

Tk 64cr project to establish Bangabandhu safari park

BSS, Dhaka

The government has approved a project to establish Bangabandhu Safari Park in Gazipur aimed at protecting the historic Modhubur Shal Forests as well as its biodiversity.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests initiated the project.

Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecnc) on Tuesday approved the Tk 64 crore project under which steps would be taken for protecting the natural habitats of many rare species of flora and fauna from encroachment.

The ministry has initiated the project with eight objectives, including conservation of forests, wild species and biodiversity, side by side promoting eco-tourism, State Minister for Environment and Forests Dr Hasan Mahmud said yesterday.

Steps would be taken for conserving rare and endangered wild species,

improving biodiversity of the forest through participation of local people under the three-year project, he said.

The Modhubur Shal Forest, about 40km north of Dhaka city, was famous for peacocks, tiger, leopard, black panther, elephant, clouded leopard and Sambar deer.

However, illegal felling of trees has caused disappearance of most of the wildlife and flora. Most of the forest has been denuded and is now occupied by land grabbers and displaced people.

Officials said 1,987 hectares of forest land of Sreepur Range of the Forest Department would be developed as a safe habitat for both herbivorous and carnivorous animals.

The project would be one of the government initiatives for conservation of forests to protect wild animals in line with the international multilateral environment agreements, they said.

For the project, they said, the govern-

ment would acquire 80.97 hectares of private land. Grassland would be developed on 150 hectares of plain area while fruit bearing trees would be planted on 80 hectares of land to ensure food security of birds and animals.

A large area of forest would be encircled for tigers and lions and a natural interpretation center cum nature history, three water bodies, one veterinary hospital and a 10km

bituminous and three kilometre brick made road would be constructed under the project.

According to the officials, the forest now has about 220 plant species, including 43 different tree species, 19 shrubs, 3 palms, 27 grasses, 24 vines and 104 herbs.

The wildlife in the park includes 13 mammals, 9 reptiles, 5 birds and 5 amphibians. In addition, the Forest Department has recently introduced peacocks, deer, pythons, and catfish.



Meher Afroz Chumki MP speaks at a discussion on 'Formulating a guideline for educational institutions to stop sexual harassment' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On her left is former adviser to the caretaker government Rasheda K Chowdhury and on her right is Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed.

WB to help carry out studies for conservation of Sundarbans forest

BSS, Dhaka

The World Bank (WB) will provide the government with non-lending technical assistance to help carry out various studies for conservation of the Sundarbans forest, the largest single mangrove ecosystem in the world.

The project will develop a programme that will integrate prioritised interventions to address the region's main conservation and development challenges like poverty reduction, climate change adaptation and biodiversity conservation.

The people of the Sundarbans surrounding areas that is known as Sundarbans Impact Zone (SIZ) are poor, a WB spokesman told BSS yesterday.

The SIZ is far behind in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and about 1.2 million people's livelihood depends on extraction of the Sundarbans' resources though settlement within the forest is prohibited.

The area of the Bangladesh Sundarbans is roughly 6017 square kilometre, of which

roughly 1874 square kilometre is water area and only 1400 square kilometre of the total Sundarbans forest is declared as protected area.

The updated poverty map of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) shows that at least 48 percent of the population of the upazilas surrounding the Sundarbans is below the upper poverty line.

In Sathkira, the population below the upper poverty line is at least 60 percent and the low income levels in the region together with poor transport systems and challenges in providing access to income, livelihood, education and health have contributed to the difficulties of daily life in the SIZ.

For their survival, many local people are left with no choice but to unsustainably exploit the Sundarbans Reserved Forest for timber, fish, shrimp seed, and other forest produce.

Sea level rise associated with the climate change and extreme weather events compound the development challenges of the Sundarbans area.

Natural subsidence occurs in the area as a result of complex hydrological and soil processes and the Sundarbans area is subject to recurrent cyclonic storms and floods.

Available climate change models suggest that the intensity of cyclonic storms will increase over the coming decades, threatening the existence of the Sundarbans area.

A technical team of World Bank visited Bangladesh in March to discuss the draft concept note for the technical assistance.

The technical assistance will focus on socio-economic development for poverty reduction in the Sundarbans Impact Zone and ensure biodiversity conservation and environmental sustainability in the Sundarbans Reserved Forest.

The planned studies, which are expected to be completed by September, 2011, will include Demographic and Gender Studies; Socio-economic Development; Biodiversity Conservation and Environmental Management; Climate Change Adaptation; and Institutional Analysis.

Policy needed to stop sexual harassment on campus

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday said, apart from raising awareness about social problems, policy for educational institutions needs to be devised and carried out to stop sexual harassment.

The roundtable on "Formulation of policy to stop sexual harassment in educational institutions" was held at VIP Lounge, Jatiya Press Club in the city, organized by Action Aid in association with National Girl Child Advocacy Forum and Shaptahik 2000.

Law needs to be formulated and put into practice strictly to stop sexual harassment in educational institutions and other workplaces, said renowned educationist Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed.

Sayed was speaking as the chief guest at the discussion.

If a teacher harasses any student sexually or by any means in any institute, he will have no right to be in the profession, and this should be prohibited by policy and rules, he added.

Rasheda K Chowdhury, former advisor to caretaker government, said local government can also play a significant role in stopping such harassment in educational institutions and thus ensuring the security of a girl child.

According to lawyer and human rights activist Sara Hossain, society should openly raise its voice against this harassment as it frequently occurs in the academic institutions, committed by the teachers.

She also said sexual harassment in educational institution often goes under political clout which is one of the biggest obstacles to eradicate the problem.

On the other hand an allegation of sexual harassment made by a victim should not be forced to be proved. A sound judgment should decide, whether on the balance of probabilities, the incident has occurred. This can secure a girl's position against sexual harassment, she added.

Lawmaker Meher Afroz Chumki also talked about the parents' responsibility to guide their children against stalking and make them aware about sexual harassment.

The exemplary punishment should be imposed to remove such nuisance, she said.

Psychologist Farida Akhter, Project Director Dr Abul Hossain of Multi Sectoral Programme in preventing women repression, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, among others, spoke.

2,000 nurses to be recruited in 2 weeks: Nanak

BSS, Dhaka

State Minister for Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) and Cooperatives Jahangir Kabir Nanak yesterday said 2000 nurses would be recruited within next two weeks.

"The government has given adequate emphasis on the health sector to implement the vision 2021 and decided to recruit 3,000 more nurses in phases," he said while addressing a discussion at the Bangladesh Medical College and Hospital auditorium in the city. The discussion was organised by the medical college in observance of the International Nurses Day-2010.

Chaired by director of the hospital Prof Md Aktar Morshed, the discussion was addressed, among others, by

National Professor Dr Nurul Islam, Prof Md Yusuf Ali, Prof Abu Ahmed Chowdhury, Prof CH Kabir, Prof M A Zaman, Dr Abdur Rouf Sardar and Captain (Retd) Dr Aleya Begum.

Nanak said the nursing is a noble and humanitarian profession. The International Nurses Day is being observed on the birthday of Florence Nightingale, the pioneer of modern nursing in the world, he said, adding that her contribution to the distressed humanity should be upheld by the medical scientists, physicians and nurses through various programmes.

CASE AGAINST BABAR

HC asks govt to explain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule upon the government to explain why the continuation and proceedings of tax dodging case against former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar should not be declared illegal.

The HC bench of Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam and Justice SM Emdadul Hoque issued the rule upon a writ petition filed by Babar.

Deputy Tax Commissioner Syed Zakir Hossain of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) filed the case on February 14 with the Senior Special Judge's Court in Dhaka against Babar on charge of dodging Tk 2.65 crore income tax from 1999-2000 to 2008-09 fiscal years.

The Senior Special Judge's Court the same day issued an arrest warrant against the detained former state minister in the case.

Babar recently filed a writ petition with the HC challenging the continuation and proceedings of the case.

Barrister Moudud Ahmed appeared for the petitioner.

Number of tigers on the decline

UNB, Dhaka

The number of tigers in the wild continues to decline, with only around 3,500 wild tigers remaining in the whole world.

With an estimated 300 to 500 tigers, the Sundarbans has an opportunity to contribute significantly to the conservation of tigers and biodiversity that they represent.

However, to make this happen, it requires participation of multiple stakeholders to bring about awareness of tiger conservation.

This was disclosed at a workshop at the conference room of Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh (WTB) yesterday.

WTB organised a workshop for various stakeholder groups to get feedback on an initial work to develop a strategy from the workshop that it organised in March.

The participants included representatives from Forest Department, Department of Environment, Ministry of Education, other related government organisations, local Sundarbans community whose lives are directly affected by tigers, national and international organisations engaged in conservation work, newspaper and electronic media who can help raise awareness about conservation of our national animal and individuals who have insight knowledge about tiger and the Sundarbans.

The conservation education and community outreach workshop is designed and coordinated by WTB's Sundarbans Tiger Project with the funding support from US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Chairman of WTB Enayetullah Khan inaugurated the workshop, saying that tiger conservation has become an international issue now and WTB wants to work with its other partners to address the threats to conserve our national animal.

WTB's CEO Prof Mohammad Anwarul Islam in his speech said such workshops are essential for developing partnerships with other organisations and for jointly working for tiger conservation.

He said based on the outcome of this workshop, WTB will form a strategy that will work in line with Bangladesh Tiger Action Plan (BTAP) to conserve tigers.

Earlier, WTB helped the government develop BTAP, which was approved by the Ministry of Environment and Forest in January this year.

7 killed in road crashes

METRO DESK

Seven people, including a leader of Awami Swechhasebok League, were killed and 41 others injured in separate road accidents in Mymensingh and Rangpur yesterday.

In Mymensingh, three passengers died and another sustained injuries as a microbus plunged into a roadside ditch on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at Churkhai Jamtala in Sadar upazila.

Two of deceased were identified as Abu Taher, 45, Awami Swechhasebok League president of Gulshan (North) unit, Dhaka and his friend MM Quddus Apu, 35.

The identity of another could not be known immediately, reports our Mymensingh correspondent.

Witnesses said the microbus fell into the ditch as its driver lost his control over the steering around 4:00am, leaving Taher and Apu dead on the spot.

Another succumbed to his injuries at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital later. The

bodies were sent to hospital morgue for autopsy. Injured Abdul Halim was undergoing treatment at the MMCH.

Taher along with his friends was going to Mymensingh to attend a programme, police said.

Police seized the microbus. A case was filed in this connection.

In Rangpur, four people were killed and 40 others injured as a Comilla-bound passenger bus fell into a roadside ditch near Ekorchali area in Taraganj upazila.

One of the dead was identified as Saiful, 40, while the identity of others could not be ascertained immediately, reports our Rangpur correspondent.

Witnesses said the accident took place while the bus was trying to overtake another about 8:00am.

Three passengers died on the spot while another succumbed to his injuries at Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

The injured were also admitted to the RMCH where condition of five was stated to be critical.

Zillur for modernising air force

BSS, Dhaka

President and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Zillur Rahman yesterday laid emphasis on modernising the Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) through providing advance training and modern technologies.

"Modernising the Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) is the demand of the time," the president said while addressing the members of the air force at a Darbar at the BAF Headquarters in Dhaka Cantonment.

He hoped that BAF would become one of the finest professional and competent forces in the world with advanced training, using modern technology and being imbued with patriotism.

There is no alternative to training for achieving excellence in professionalism, the president said, adding: "I hope the BAF members will play an important role in the

country's development and the force will be enlightened with the spirit of patriotism."

Describing the present government's plan to build the BAF as a modern and professional force as time-befitting, the president expressed his firm belief that the initiative would be successfully implemented with concerted efforts of all members of the air force.

Zillur Rahman also lauded the contribution of members of the air force in the UN peacekeeping mission along with their regular activities in the country, particularly rescue and relief work during natural calamities.

Earlier on his arrival at the air force headquarters, the president was received by Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal SM Ziaur Rahman. A smartly turned-out BAF contingent presented the president a guard of honour.

Later, the president planted a litchi sapling on the headquarters premises.

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